

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS

RE: Federal Communications Commission Requests Comment on Spectrum Needs of Emergency Response Providers (Public Notice FCC 05-80).

In the Intelligence Reform Act Congress rightly required the FCC to conduct a study of short and long-term spectrum needs for emergency response providers, and to seek input from emergency response providers regarding the creation of a nationwide interoperable communications network.

I have long believed that such a study was long overdue, so I am glad that we are beginning the process today. A useful report to Congress will: (1) include a survey of what spectrum is currently being used by which entities across the country; (2) understand that not all frequencies are the same and therefore assess whether we are matching spectrum with appropriate physical characteristics to current and future public safety needs; (3) indicate whether some bands are being underutilized because public safety needs have changed since initial allocation; (4) assess the current interference situation in public safety bands; (5) identify various approaches to interoperability and their success or failure; (6) identify the current availability of interoperable channels and whether or not they are widely used and why; and (7) determine how a nationwide interoperable network can connect not only local police and fire entities, but also the FBI, DHS, FEMA, and other critical Federal agencies. I also believe that we must begin to understand that emergency rooms and the medical community are integral parts of emergency response and homeland security. If we build a system that excludes the medical community it will be dangerously incomplete.

I commend Chairman Martin for beginning this process and I beseech every emergency responder that currently uses spectrum resources and every entity that believes that they should be part of an interoperable system, including the medical community, to respond to this extremely important public notice.